



MONDAY 19 JULY 2010

Welcome to the FOM Newsletter.

### In this issue...

## Promoting Positive Mental Health in Health Professionals, Newry, 1 October

Booking Now - [Programme and Booking Form](#)

## Vacancies for Regional Specialty Advisors and Deputies

Dr Bill Jenkinson has advised us that he is stepping down from the role of Regional Specialty Advisor (RSA) for Northern Ireland, having completed three years in this role. We would like to thank him for his support to the Faculty and wish him well for the future. Now he has been appointed as Director of Training, Dr Ian Aston is stepping down as RSA for Trent. We would like to also thank him for his work in this post. We are looking to fill a number of vacancies and we would be very grateful if members would consider offering their services for the following posts:

**Regional Specialty Advisor (RSA)** - Trent, Northern Ireland, Northern England, North West Thames, Oxford

**Deputy Regional Specialty Advisor** - Northern England, North East Thames, South West Thames, South of Scotland

If you are interested in taking on one of these roles or would like further information, please contact David Greening, Training Co-ordinator (Programme Support) at [david.greening@facocmed.ac.uk](mailto:david.greening@facocmed.ac.uk).

## 2009 CPD Audit

- Some members will shortly be receiving a letter inviting them participate in the 2009 CPD audit.
- The audit will cover only External CPD.
- The supporting evidence must be presented in sequential order, as set out on the CPD form, page five.
- Deadline for receipt of documentation is **31st August 2010**.

## Complaints about Occupational Physicians - A comment by Dr David Snashall

During 2007 when I was President of the Faculty, there was a flurry of complaints to the General Medical Council about occupational physicians whose opinions on clients' health and their ability to work were violently disagreed with. The Faculty had correspondence and meetings with the GMC over these cases, with the GMC formulating their policy on how they wished to proceed – the "stream 2" process. The Council was well aware that most of these cases did not call an occupational physician's fitness to practise into question but, on the other hand, they felt bound to inquire of

the doctor's employer if there was any history of concerns. This "no smoke without fire" attitude naturally upset some occupational physicians, particularly those in the commercial sector or those without an employer as such but who provided services to a number of customers. The process took rather a long time in some cases and some occupational physicians, who considered that they were practising properly and simply providing properly evidenced professional advice with which their client simply disagreed were being unnecessarily called to account by their regulatory body.

Representing the Faculty in this way provided an interesting exercise in supporting our members but recently a new, and very personal, slant was put on the issue when a letter of complaint from a client whom I had seen on behalf of an insurance company was sent to the Chief Executive of my Trust. Similar letters were sent to the insurance company who had commissioned the report and the agents who acted for the insurance company. When the complaint was passed on to me for comment I noted that it threatened the complaint was going to involve the GMC as well so I was not surprised when the dreaded letter hit the doormat. The complaint was very strong and made a number of allegations about my conduct, manner and professionalism during the consultation. Interestingly, the complainant was not particularly critical about my conclusions – in fact at the time the complaint was made, my draft report had not reached them – they had wanted to see the report in advance of the people who commissioned it.

The GMC told me in the letter that they were not necessarily going to pursue the complaint as a fitness to practise issue but were bound to inform my employer and the agents who commissioned the report in order to ascertain whether there had been other complaints about my practice. They asked me to name the individuals to whom they should write and to give my side of the story. This I did.

This was time consuming, embarrassing and not a little anxiety-provoking. If the GMC were to have taken some action against me then I probably would not be writing this article, but they did not. Throughout, the GMC were polite, non-accusatory, clear in what they were asking and, most importantly, expeditious. They wrote in no uncertain terms to all the stakeholders (if that is the correct term) and the client.

All's well that ends well is an understandable sentiment in this case but there's more to it than personal relief: the Faculty's work with the GMC on this matter (together with representations from the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health) really has made a difference to the way these kinds of cases are handled by the GMC.

**Dr David Snashall**  
25 May 2010

## **Newly launched: 'Recovering Well'**

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has published a series of leaflets - <http://www.rcog.org.uk/recovering-well> - which are aimed specifically at women recovering from gynaecological surgery, to help them plan for a return to fitness, including returning to work.

This follows on from leaflets published last year by the Royal College of Surgeons, 'Get well soon' - [http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/patient\\_information/return-to-work](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/patient_information/return-to-work) - which advise on recovery and return to work, after various operations including gall bladder removal and total knee replacement.

Both projects were supported by a representative from the Faculty.

## **Nuclear Industry and Ionising Radiations Occupational**

## Physicians (NIIROPs') Forum and Meetings

The Nuclear Industry Occupational Physicians' (NIIROPs') Forum is believed to have been initiated by the CMO, UKAEA, some 20 years or so ago and has evolved through regular meetings of BNFL occupational physicians (OPs) as representatives of other branches of the nuclear industry, initially civil and later from defence establishments, were invited. Subsequently, OPs from other sectors with interests in ionising radiation joined (and hence the expansion of the title to recognise other undertakings where ionising radiation is employed or generated) such that some 20 OPs are currently on the distribution list. Generally, less attend meetings which are small but intimate and generate useful discussion and ensure propagation of information that might otherwise have been missed or overlooked.

To define the purposes of membership, terms of reference have recently been formulated; while these may, at first sight, appear to be rather formal, the intention is to set out all of the concepts of membership of a closely knit and really, very friendly and informal, grouping. These set out types of membership – basically "Full" and "Corresponding" but there is neither cost (other than that of travel and subsistence incurred by attending meetings) nor commitment and members may transfer membership categories, leave and rejoin at will, according to their own changing circumstances. Fourteen have opted for "Full" membership, so far.

The main purposes are to relate to each other, share our knowledge and experiences and be prepared, should it ever be necessary, to support each other in the event of accident or incident, though we may, and do, occasionally, seek advice or opinion from each other on a purely informal basis.

Interested OPs are invited to seek further information and join should they then so wish. The current Secretary is Dr David C B Holt who will willingly respond to enquiries and should be addressed at [david@holt.net](mailto:david@holt.net) or called on 07810 657 673.

## Correction to newsletter issued 25 May 2010

There is an error in the item 'New Occupational Health Support for Primary Care Practice'. The Welsh project that initiated the Healthy Working UK website was 'Healthy Working Wales'.

## Footnote

You should have received electronic notification of our October conference, [Promoting Positive Mental Health in Health Professionals](#), and will shortly receive a hard copy.

We are very pleased to be able to run a day's meeting on this very important topic and I hope to see you there.

With best wishes



Nicky Coates  
Chief Executive

